United Nations E/C.16/2006/2

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
29 December 2005

Original: English

Committee of Experts on Public Administration
Fifth session
New York, March 2006
Item 4 of the provisional agenda*
Innovations in governance and public administration for the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals

Innovations in governance and public administration for the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals

Note by the Secretariat

Summary

The present paper attempts to highlight and raise key issues on innovations in governance and public administration and their relevance for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, including issues such as why Governments should innovate, what is innovation in governance and public administration, what are the emerging principles and strategies in governance and public administration innovation for achieving the Millennium Development Goals, what facilitates or hinders innovation in public administration, what can Governments do to create an enabling environment for innovation in public administration, and what are the tools and methodologies for sharing and adapting innovations in governance and public administration. The report also seeks to elicit recommendations from the members of the Committee on (a) how to improve sharing of knowledge on innovations in governance to achieve internationally agreed goals, including the Millennium Development Goals; (b) how the international community can better assist Member States in replicating and adapting innovations; and (c) how to foster policies that encourage innovation in the public sector.

* E/C.16/2006/1.

05-66702 (E) 250106

Contents

		Paragraphs	*Pa*
I.	Introduction	1–4	
II.	Why should Governments innovate?	5–10	
III.	What is innovation in governance and public administration?	11–17	
IV.	What are the emerging principles and strategies in governance and public administration innovation for achieving the Millennium Development Goals?	18–23	
V.	What facilitates or hinders innovation in public administration?	24–27	
VI.	What can Governments do to create an enabling environment for innovation in public administration?	28–33	
VII.	Methodologies for sharing and adapting innovations in governance and public administration	34–42	
VIII.	Recommendations	43–46	

I. Introduction

1. Although some progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals has been made across the world, it has not been as significant as hoped for. According to the United Nations Millennium Project report, "Some regions have made little progress or even experienced reversals in several areas. Many countries have seen economic growth while others have experienced stagnation".[1] Despite this mixed picture, reaching the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 is not impossible, but it calls for breaking with business as usual. The Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, stated that. "Success will require sustained action across the entire decade between now and the deadline. It takes time to train the teachers, nurses and engineers; to build the roads, schools and hospitals; to grow the small and large businesses able to create the jobs and income needed." (See A/59/2005, para. 31.) As highlighted by the General Assembly in its resolution 57/277, "efficient, accountable, effective and transparent public administration, at both the national and international levels, has a key role to play in the implementation of internationally agreed goals". The Committee of Experts on Public Administration, at its session in April 2005, also underscored that more just and fair societies, as stated in the Millennium Development Goals, call for a wider role for public administration in addressing inequalities and the situation of the poor.[2] Moreover, the Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 2005/55, stressed that participatory processes of Government need to be deepened to ensure the engagement of citizens to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

2. While there is wide consensus at the international level on what should be done to accelerate development and prosperity, there seems to be less shared knowledge and capacity on how to do so. Knowledge on how to achieve the Millennium Development Goals exists, but it is often fragmented and spread among several countries. In fact, it is not unusual that a Government has been able to address challenges in one development area, but not in others. In order to capitalize on existing knowledge, the General Assembly recommended, in its resolution 57/277, that the exchange of experiences related to the role of public administration in the implementation of internationally agreed goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration, be encouraged. Furthermore, in its resolution 60/34, the General Assembly agreed that the United Nations should promote innovation in government and public administration and stressed the importance of making more effective use of United Nations Public Service Day and the United Nations Public Service Awards in the process of revitalizing public administration by building a culture of innovation, partnership and responsiveness. In its resolution 2005/55, the Economic and Social Council further recognized that all Member States, particularly those from the developing countries, can greatly benefit from peer learning and the sharing of experiences about innovation and initiatives in the public sector.

3. Sharing knowledge on innovations and successful practices can provide Governments with a set of concrete and workable options on how to achieve internationally agreed goals. Focusing on innovations affords the opportunity to shift attention from what Governments should do to respond to increasingly complex challenges to how they can do it. Learning from other countries can save time, inspire new reforms and, in some cases, help countries to leapfrog stages of development. Sharing successful practices is relevant, not so much in the sense that countries can transfer an existing model from another country into their own

administrative system, but rather that they can adapt elements of successful practices from other contexts to their internal circumstances, and most importantly that this process can serve as an incentive to jump-start other similar initiatives. Besides, focusing on innovations, rather than exclusively on challenges, is a way to provide incentives for reform and to encourage a positive and constructive outlook on development.

4. Aware of the tremendous potential of this approach to development efforts, the Committee of Experts on Public Administration decided to devote part of its fifth session to the discussion of innovation in public administration for the achievement of the internationally agreed goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. To facilitate the work of the Committee, this paper attempts to highlight and raise key issues on innovations in governance and their relevance for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals,[3] as well as to elicit recommendations from the members of the Committee on (a) how to improve sharing of knowledge on innovations in governance to achieve the internationally agreed goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, (b) how the international community can better assist Member States in replicating and adapting innovations, and (c) how to foster policies that encourage innovation in the public sector.

II. Why should Governments innovate?

5. These are challenging times for Governments around the world since they need to respond to increasingly complex demands from their citizens and to significant changes in their global environments. On the one hand, Governments are grappling with a number of difficult social and economic issues, including poverty eradication, unemployment, poor education systems, health epidemics (including HIV/AIDS and the avian influenza) and environmental degradation. On the other hand, they are attempting to readjust their policies and skills to effectively integrate into the world economy. All of these challenges are putting a strain on the capacity of the State to accomplish its mission effectively.

6. Within a framework of extreme diversity in local conditions and situations, it is possible to identify four major trends worldwide of State and public administration transformation. The first trend relates to the construction or reconstruction of a State that operates according to the rule of law. The second one relates to the revitalization of the State and public administration. The third trend has to do with the reconfiguration of the role of the State. A fourth trend, which has emerged in the past years, is related to a growing demand to make democracy more meaningful and to allow for more opportunities of participation in policymaking.[4]

7. Overall, Governments are faced with three main domestic challenges. First, they need to operate and provide more far-reaching and higher quality services with reduced resources and limited operational capacities. That is to say, Governments need to use their resources and build capacities not only more effectively, but also more creatively by, for example, enlisting the support of the private sector and civil society in service delivery. Second, they need to make public institutions more accountable, responsive and effective by promoting a more citizen-oriented public administration. Third, and most importantly, they need to respond more adequately to the demands of citizens for greater participation. Although Government is still central to society, it is now widely recognized that governance is not the sole

prerogative of Governments, and that civil society and the private sector also have important roles to play in this sphere. Citizens no longer perceive themselves as passive "consumers" of Government services, but as dealing more effectively with emerging issues. Deepening democracy in order to provide opportunities not only for improved representation, but also for more active participation and engagement in public affairs requires innovative institutional mechanisms, processes and policies.

8. As a consequence, several countries around the world are attempting to revitalize their public administration, make it more proactive, more efficient, more accountable and, especially, more service-oriented. To accomplish this transformation, Governments are introducing innovations in their organizational structure, practices, capacities and how they mobilize, deploy and utilize the human, material, information, technological and financial resources for service delivery to remote, disadvantaged and challenged people.

9. Experience has shown that introducing innovations in governance has a number of positive results. First, it can help maximize the utilization of resources and capacities to create public value and encourage a more open and participatory culture in government, therefore improving good governance in general. Second, by improving the image and services of the public sector, it can help Governments regain people's trust and restore legitimacy. Third, innovation in governance can boost the pride of civil servants working in the public sector, as well as encourage a culture of continuous improvement. Innovations can have an inspirational capacity, which builds a sense of the possible among public officials. Fourth, although innovations are limited governance interventions or microlevel initiatives, they can produce a domino effect in that a successful innovation in one sector can open the door to innovations in other areas. Each innovation can create the opportunity for a series of innovations leading to a favourable environment for positive change. Innovations can contribute towards building an institution, and change the relationship between levels of Government and within Government departments. A recent study on Mexico[5] shows that innovations are strongly contributing to the democratization of institutions and processes. Thus, although an innovation per se is a small process, it can trigger a bigger process of transformation of the State. Accordingly, innovations can help create new democratic spaces and thereby stimulate good governance by reinventing Government. This is certainly true for countries that are slowly building democratic institutions. It is also true for advanced democracies since good government is a key factor in strengthening democratic governance. It is well known that even in mature democracies, State institutions are not always well equipped to face complex emerging challenges. In fact, although the basic values behind any constitutional democracy are universal and well accepted by many countries around the world, how well institutions work and adequately reflect those values is an open-ended process.

10. As can be easily inferred, innovations in governance and public administration should not be regarded as a fashion or trend. Governments that have dealt effectively with increasingly complex national, regional and international challenges have introduced innovative ideas and practices in governance and public administration systems and processes. It is also very important to bear in mind that innovation is not an end in itself, but a means to improve public administration in order to enhance the quality of life of all citizens. In addition, innovations should be seen as complementary mechanisms to reinforcing democratic governance, but not

as a substitute for existing institutions, including Parliament, public administration, etc. Furthermore, each organization in the public sector should decide how much innovation it needs, and how to balance stability and continuity, on the one hand, and innovation, on the other. Not everything in the public sector can be about innovation. Finally, it should be mentioned that innovations are not a "special benefit" of countries with developed administrative systems. As shown by the increasing number of applications submitted to the United Nations Public Service Awards, successful practices are initiated both in developed and developing countries and have been transferred from the latter to developed countries (e.g., the integrated public services system launched by the state of Bahia in Brazil was adopted by Portugal and others).

III. What is innovation in governance and public administration?

11. Documenting and sharing innovations in public administration is a very important tool for fostering innovation in Government and promoting development. Despite the wealth of good examples around the world, the challenge is to distinguish between cases that are indeed innovations and cases that do not fall in this category. In other words, what is presented as an innovative practice is not always a successful long-term experience that can be disseminated to other countries. To assist Member States that are interested in replicating innovations, it is necessary to define what is meant by innovation and by "best practice".[6]

12. According to the report of the Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements, presented to the General Assembly,[7] "best practices" (a) have a demonstrable and tangible impact on improving people's quality of life; (b) are the result of effective partnerships between the public, private and civil society sectors; and (c) are socially, economically and environmentally sustainable. The General Assembly, in its follow-up to the Habitat Agenda, further recommends that best practices be used as one of the two key instruments for assessing progress in achieving its twin goals of shelter for all and sustainable urbanization (see General Assembly resolution S-25/2).

13. The concept of best or successful practices is widely used to distinguish exemplary or improved performance in organizations. It can be defined as an activity or procedure that has produced outstanding results and could be adapted to improve effectiveness and efficiency in another situation. For the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, focusing on "best practice" means accumulating and applying knowledge about what works and what does not work in different situations and contexts. It is both the lessons learned and the continuing process of learning, feedback, reflection and analysis (what works, how and why, etc.). The focus of analysis is on "success stories" in order to discover the chain of practices, the ways of doing things that achieve results.

14. The conceptual distinction between innovations and "best/successful practices" is, however, contested. Some believe that if innovations are sustainable, they become successful practices. From that perspective, the difference between the two concepts lies in the time frame. Others maintain instead that one of the defining criteria of an innovation is sustainability. It is also interesting to note that since the field of innovation in governance is not as well-developed as that of innovations in the private sector, there are different definitions of what an innovation in

governance and public administration is. For example, one of the criteria to select winners for the United Nations Public Service Awards is the introduction of a new concept, i.e., Government introduces a unique idea, distinctively new approach to problem solution or unique policy or implementation design, in the context of a given country or region, for transparency, accountability and responsiveness of public service.[8] The Impumelelo Innovations Awards Trust in South Africa,[9] which rewards exceptional projects involving partnerships with the public sector that enhance the quality of life of poor communities in innovative ways, uses the following evaluation criteria to define an innovation:

- **Innovativeness**: the extent to which initiative, creativity and new procedures have been developed to address major poverty related issues
- **Government involvement**: involvement of Government and partnerships
- **Effectiveness**: the extent to which the project has achieved or is on its way to achieving its stated objectives and other socially desirable outcomes
- **Poverty impact**: the demonstrable effect of the project on improving the quality of life of poor communities and individuals
- **Sustainability**: the viability and sound functioning of the project within constraints, such as funding, staffing and so forth
- **Replicability**: the value of the project in teaching others new ideas and good practices for poverty reduction programmes

15. The American Government Awards programme selection of innovations in the United States uses four criteria, which include:

- **Novelty**: a leap of creativity
- **Effectiveness**: tangible results
- **Significance**: addresses a problem of public concern
- **Transferability**: replicability and scalability

16. In general terms, innovation is a creative idea involving implementation, which is different from invention. It is the act of conceiving and implementing a new way of achieving a result and/or performing work. An innovation may involve the incorporation of new elements, a new combination of existing elements or a significant change or departure from the traditional way of doing things. It refers to new products, new policies and programmes, new approaches and new processes. Public sector management innovation may also be defined as the development of new policy designs and new standard operating procedures by public organizations to address public policy problems. Thus, an innovation in public administration is an effective, creative and unique answer to new problems or a new answer to old problems. Furthermore, an innovation is not a closed and complete solution, but an open solution, transformed by those who adopt it.

17. There are different types of innovations in public administration, including (a) institutional innovations, which focus on the renewal of established institutions and/or the establishment of new institutions; (b) organizational innovation, including the introduction of new working procedures or management techniques in public administration; (c) process innovation, which focuses on the improvement of the quality of public service delivery; and (d) conceptual innovation, which focuses

on the introduction of new forms of governance (e.g., interactive policymaking, engaged governance, people's budget reforms, horizontal networks). The areas of innovation are also varied, including human resources development and management, public service delivery, information and communication technology (ICT) applications in government operations, decentralization, etc.

IV. What are the emerging principles and strategies in governance and public administration innovation for achieving the Millennium Development Goals?

18. A number of innovative and successful solutions are being applied to governance and public administration challenges, including the Millennium Development Goals. Examining innovative cases of Government services selected by the United Nations Public Service Awards and other internationally renowned awards, a number of key principles and strategies for innovation in governance emerge as prominent: (a) integrating services; (b) decentralizing service delivery; (c) utilizing partnerships; (d) engaging citizens; and (e) taking advantage of ICT.

Integrating services

19. With public sectors offering an increased number of services, the focus is shifting from what kinds of services are provided to how they are provided. In several countries, a host of services are not only being provided, but are increasingly coordinated and customized to fit the needs of the citizens. Back-office operations are no longer the decisive factor in where the citizen needs to go; instead, these operations are tied together by either integrating early in the value chain or by bundling services together in a single entry point for the citizens. Regardless of whether action is targeted upstream or downstream, the result is integration in products and services offered by public authorities. In the Philippines, gender and development mainstreaming efforts saw the creation of the Davao Medical Center, which in turn set up the Women and Children Protection Unit, a one-stop family crisis intervention centre that provides legal, psychiatric and medical services to its patients. In Brazil, the Bahia's Citizen Assistance Service Centres bring together federal, state, and municipal agencies in a single location to offer multiple Government services. The centres have been placed in locations convenient to the public, such as shopping malls and major public transportation hubs. The concept of the Citizen Assistance Service Centres one-stop shop has been successfully adapted by a number of developed and developing countries, such as Portugal, Mozambique and South Africa. Within this category, there are several innovations, including client-focused one-stop service delivery for social services and mobile service delivery for multiservice clients in remote areas and other similar innovations.

Decentralizing service delivery

20. Bringing services and public officials closer to people (e.g., from national to regional level) often ensures a higher level of responsiveness and customization and thus increased satisfaction on behalf of citizens and businesses. Decentralized service delivery also allows for greater involvement of citizens in providing feedback on public services, and therefore for a better match between local services and local needs. In economic terms, maintaining a solely centralized system of

service delivery and monitoring also tends to curb development outside of urban centres due to prohibitive transaction costs for either the supplier of services (i.e., Government) or the users (i.e., citizens and business). In Morocco, for example, the PAGER project, which brings water to the rural population, would not be feasible were it not for the devolution of the operation and maintenance of water facilities to local communities. So far the project has substantially increased the rate of the rural population with access to drinking water from 14 per cent in 1994 to 55 per cent at the end of 2003. In a knock-on effect, apart from the obvious benefits of clean water and adequate sanitation, PAGER has also had a huge impact on primary school enrolment in rural areas, where the attendance for girls has surged from 30 per cent to 51 per cent with young children, in particular girls, previously supplying families with water. In another example from Morocco, the establishment of regional control facilities for controlling fresh exports of fruit and vegetable had a significant impact on the competitiveness of the sector. Previously, business incurred prohibitive costs to compete successfully in the international market because of the high rejection rates of products having to be transported to a small number of centralized facilities far away from the source of processing. In Indonesia, in the Tanah Datar District of West Sumatra, decentralization was carried out in 2001, and as a result policies were implemented by the District Education Department in Tanah Datar to increase the quality of teaching in schools with the aim of improving the condition of students from poor families. Particularly innovative were the policies to limit the number of students in each class, to create a reward-system for high performing students and teachers and to institute a performance-based contracting of headmasters.[10] In general, recent innovative strategies include decentralized policy development, implementation and evaluation, as well as decentralized budgeting and expenditure management assessments.

Utilizing partnerships

21. Public-private partnerships and joined-up government or inter-agency collaboration are all becoming more common with the general public expecting greater participation, better utilization of resources and increased efficiency in service delivery. Considering the lack of precedents, this often requires innovative approaches unlike earlier compartmentalized ("silo") administration. In Greece, for example, the 1502 call centre takes advantage of the expertise of the national telecommunication agency by allowing operators within a special service of the agency to provide information regarding available services. In addition, the responsible ministry has made special arrangements, both with the agency and the postal services to keep prices affordable. Also, the establishment of consultative groups and committees, which include public officials and members of the business community and which deal with policy/budgeting issues, is now rapidly being adopted by other countries. In Jordan, the national network for poverty alleviation, established in 1998, has connected Government ministries, national commissions, non-governmental organizations and activists into a productive network and demonstrated the dramatic impact that multidisciplinary groups can have in promoting national poverty alleviation and social development. In the United Republic of Tanzania, the safer cities approach encourages partnerships between national Governments, city governments, neighbourhoods and citizens. The approach, which was launched in 1996 by the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT), aims to provide local authorities (cities, municipalities and towns) with technical support to develop sustainable ways of preventing

violence and crime. In a collaborative effort, priorities were identified, which eventually led to the development of a crime prevention strategy that has created awareness, improved relations between the police and the population and committed local authorities to continuous action.

Engaging citizens

22. Citizens are being increasingly engaged in providing inputs into government policy formulation and monitoring processes. A number of countries have developed strategies to encourage the active participation of citizens in, for example, budgeting and the fiscal processes.[11] In Thailand, the Constitution has been reformed to ensure public hearings in public programmes. In Australia, the State Government of Queensland has established a community engagement division within the Premier's Department to engage the community in relevant policy deliberations to ensure social justice, equity and relevancy in public policies and programmes, especially at the regional level. Online consultations through the ConsultQLD are also available, facilitating open public consultation on critical issues currently being considered by the Government. In India, the Government of the National Capital Territory of Delhi established an innovative citizen-government approach to governance. Through the Bhagidari Cell, networks of local groups have grown from 20 citizen groups in 2000 to more than 1,600 citizen groups representing about 3 million people today. These networks discuss problems hampering effective delivery of services with government representatives and then produce joint workable solutions in areas such as water supply, sanitation, schools, power supply and urban transport. Further, many countries, especially at the city level, now practice what is known as the citizens' report card system, a citizen-based monitoring and public accountability system.[12]

Taking advantage of information and communication technology

23. As the 2003 *World Public Sector Report*[13] points out, the use of internet-based services as a way to cut red tape or to spread digital infrastructure has expanded rapidly throughout public sectors in recent years. In Cameroon, for example, a new personnel and payroll data system allows better control of procedures, including the elimination of listing non-existent employees on the payroll ("ghost workers"). ICT applications, in general, have been introduced to upgrade service delivery in terms of wider access to services, enhanced efficiency and timeliness, a more "citizen-centred" approach to services, and greater effectiveness, relevance and quality of services. Broadband[14] access policies, for example, are on the ICT agenda of most governments, since they are considered to be a key enabler of economic growth and distance education, and they make possible the special treatment of people in remote areas where advanced medical care is scarce. The Republic of Korea, for instance, expects pervasive broadband to increase industrial efficiency, create e-business and jobs, improve global competitiveness, and add the equivalent of several thousand dollars to per capita GDP. Yet, internet-based service is also a means of advancing and consolidating transparency and democracy into the overall practice of public administration. The application of ICT in local government operations, for example by establishing electronic public information offices, has enabled local governments — policymakers and public officials — to better interact with the public, particularly individual citizens. This enhanced interaction may support Government responsiveness and relevance by allowing citizens to better express their needs, participate in and influence policymaking, comment on policy implementation,

provide feedback on government services (on and off-line services) and file complaints, among other activities. In Mongolia, for example, a model online consultation facility has been created for engaging citizen participation. The site includes a legislative forum designed for citizen comments on the specific laws posted on the site and a policy forum for discussion about existing or proposed policies.[15]

V. What facilitates or hinders innovation in public administration?

24. To understand what facilitates or hinders innovation in governance, we should first look at how innovation in governance occurs and what is involved in the process of innovation. Innovation can be induced from an outside actor (such as the case of the European Union and its accession policy) or it can be internally driven. Both are important triggers of change. Innovations can occur at all levels of government, i.e., central and local levels. They can also be jump-started by citizens with the Government playing only a facilitating role. There are a number of examples of where people have come together to solve a problem affecting the whole community. In Croatia, for instance, the collaboration between judges, law professors, lawyers and law students, working together in an NGO, has resulted in a web-based legal information infrastructure, called the Judges' web, in order to improve the transparency, efficiency of and access to the judicial system of Croatia. The Judges' web is considered one of the most innovative practices in the Croatian judicial administration, and its efforts have been recognized and praised by the Ministry of Justice to the extent that the project has been incorporated into the overall legal reform strategy. Studies have also shown that there is no direct link between political orientation and good government practices.[5] It is possible to identify innovative programmes regardless of the party in favour. The same can be said about size and population. It has been recorded that good Government practices occur in small municipalities, as well as in heavily populated areas, and that size is not a determinant factor for innovation to occur, nor are financial resources, as we will see later on. It is also often argued that innovations require political support, but evidence has shown that that is not always true.

25. Innovations occur for different reasons: a crisis, regime change, new leadership, opportunities or challenges. In general, people do not start out by deciding that they are going to innovate; they start by solving a problem in a way that they or others later realize is innovative. Experience shows that key factors in the success of an innovation include:

- Effective leadership (but "invisible", i.e., the leader chooses not to personalize the innovation)
- Inclusiveness, empowerment and commitment of all stakeholders (building teams and partnerships)
- Setting targets and establishing a conducive environment in which these targets can be reached
- A monitoring mechanism to measure change against established benchmarks
- A reward system that establishes accountability, enhances creative thinking and unleashes innovative abilities that otherwise could not be expressed

26. In terms of mechanics, innovation in governance involves agents of change, processes and mechanisms, as well as value systems and normative orders, technology and resources (not necessarily financial). Captains of innovation usually take risks without knowing the end result of their actions. In some cases they achieve successful results, but when they do not, failures can be disruptive for an organization that relies on continuity and a certain degree of stability and strict accountability. This has a tendency to restrain innovation in the public sector sphere. Factors that can hinder innovation in Government include lip service and administrative formalism (adopting an innovation because it looks modern, but without anything behind it); a change in a law or adoption of a practice without reference to contextual variables; structural/institutional barriers that inhibit the implementation of an innovation; institutions that do not allow risk-taking; "personalization" of the innovation by the leader or inertia of public officials who view an innovation as an exclusive prerogative of top managers in the organization. Financial resources cannot be counted as a factor that hinders innovation. In fact, many cases have proven that it is precisely the lack of funds that has triggered creativity and led to innovations in governance.

27. As much as innovations are important, it is also necessary to focus on the organizational dimension that leads to innovations. In this sense, the analysis of an innovation should be a two-step process: understanding the innovation and the organizational characteristics that lead to innovation. Scholars and practitioners are increasingly focusing on how to transform public organizations into learning and innovative organizations, rather than exclusively on how to promote single innovations.

VI. What can Governments do to create an enabling environment for innovation in public administration?

28. Everyone is for innovation yet it is very difficult to do. It takes time and energy and public servants have enough trouble coping with their current responsibilities. "Once identified as an innovation that works and the risk now diminished, innovations can spread rather quickly and are often improved or expanded".[16] A number of factors are critical to building an enabling environment for innovation, including (a) effective leadership; (b) organizational culture supportive of innovation; (c) promotion of teamwork and partnerships; (d) promotion of lifelong learning; (e) promotion of diversity; (f) monitoring the implementation of innovation; and (g) knowledge-sharing and networking.

29. As mentioned above, effective leadership is critical for the success of any innovation in governance. Strategic leadership capacity-building is an important tool to foster innovations in governance. Schools of public administration, international organizations, centres on innovation in governance and academic institutions can play a key role in this respect. Advocacy and awareness-building activities, including conferences and workshops on innovations, can also be of critical importance. Generally speaking, awareness needs to be built around the concept of what it means to be a strategic leader in the public sector. Experience has shown that strategic leaders encourage responsible risk-taking at mid- and other levels/front lines, and are open to good ideas, whatever their source, whether emanating from citizens, from inside the Government or from other Governments. It has also been

demonstrated that the type of leadership affects the sustainability of an innovation. If an innovation is based on a leader and it is not institutionalized, the innovation will die as soon as there is a change in leadership. The role of an effective leader is thus to build capacity and devolve responsibility and authority so that the innovation introduced can survive his or her departure. Accordingly, leaders that have avoided the "I syndrome" and used more inclusive language (my community) have achieved more sustainable results, as in the case of the Mayor of Bogota, Colombia, who involved the whole community in addressing the shortage of water in the city.[17]

30. With regard to the organizational culture supportive of innovation, a new mind-set or organizational culture, which places emphasis on thinking about the possible, rather than the obstacles encountered in tackling specific problems, should be promoted through different mechanisms, including recruitment mechanisms, socialization upon entry in the public service, training, fair performance appraisal system, rewards, recognition and latitude to experiment. To build a culture supportive of innovation, it is necessary to promote an organizational environment based on shared leadership and trust, i.e., an organization that promotes a sense of leadership and ownership among all employees who are seen and act as leaders in their own sphere of competence and feel empowered to take proactive measures. If public servants perceive their jobs as repetitive and mechanical, i.e., with no margin of autonomy, innovation and new solutions become less likely. On the contrary, when they feel empowered and take responsibility, the organization as a whole benefits and the public servant's professional pride and satisfaction are enhanced. In this culture, managers do not categorically reject new ideas as interruption, thus giving a strong negative message. Instead, they welcome new ideas and new approaches, and are ready to consider their potential value.

31. With respect to the promotion of teamwork and partnerships, it is well known that teams bring together people with complementary skills and experiences that exceed the capacity of any one of the members. Teams facilitate the breaking down of barriers between genders, age groups, races, ethnic groups and geographic biases. The communication skills and networks that successful teams develop create a capacity to respond quickly and flexibly to new problems and changing environment. However, teamwork is not easy, and training on team-building and how to negotiate partnerships should be encouraged in the public sector, as well as new organizational arrangements to work in partnership with civil society and the private sector. Building trust, as well as legitimacy and partnerships, are critical to the feasibility and sustainability of innovations in governance. As such, a peer-to-peer exchange, rather than a donor-recipient scenario, is preferable for sustainability of innovations. In a number of cases, it has been shown that asking the population to be involved in the solution of a pressing problem from the beginning and making it part of the solution has brought about impressive results. There is strong evidence that impositions from above (such as imposing drastic solutions on the population by limiting the water supply at intervals of time) are not as effective as changing the habits of citizens through participatory mechanisms. One way of effecting cultural change is by changing patterns of behaviour; this can be done through, for example, the use of narratives, i.e., explaining through different means of communication (including newspapers and television) why an innovation is being introduced, what people can do to help achieve the desired goal and what processes are involved.

32. Another critical factor for the development and diffusion of innovation in public service delivery is well-educated and well-trained public sector employees.

Public officials should be trained to embrace a culture of learning and to see themselves as active agents of change, as underscored by the Committee of Experts on Public Administration at its first meeting in 2002. It is impossible to introduce innovations in public organizations without continuous upgrading the knowledge and skills of employees, or without them having access to recent developments in their respective areas of expertise. Currently, distance learning offers enormous cost-effective opportunities for continuous education. Diversity can also be a source of innovative ideas and creative solutions to problems since it brings together different backgrounds and ways of thinking.

33. Innovation must be oriented to achieving measurable progress. Without a well-planned and managed approach, the routine of day-to-day operations takes over. One response to that may be developing benchmarks against which to judge the success of innovation efforts. For example, the Ministry of Government Administration and Home Affairs of the Government of the Republic of Korea has developed in 2005 a government innovation index, which is a tool to gauge the level of innovation of organizations in the public sector. The index helps organizations to diagnose levels of innovation, identify weak areas and develop action plans to fortify their innovation capacities.[18] The overall results of the index can serve as a reference for national innovation strategies. Documenting progress in innovation efforts can provide material for reference to other innovators, within and outside a specific country, who wish to learn from others successes, as discussed in the following pages.

VII. Methodologies for sharing and adapting innovations in governance and public administration

34. Sharing of information per se is not enough to enable countries to adapt innovations to their own administrative system. Successful practices are usually documented by example, resulting in only limited transfer of knowledge and ideas between countries and a tendency to "reinvent the wheel". In order to maximize the benefit of sharing successful practices among countries and to provide more effective assistance to Governments interested in replicating specific innovations in public administration, it is necessary to develop a set of tools and methodologies to identify the validity and transferability of national practices and experiences, and the steps and requirements of the implementation process. For a country to adapt an innovation from another context (or whether the federal level within a country can benefit from an innovation at the local level or vice-versa), it is necessary to evaluate (a) whether that particular experience is indeed successful; (b) whether it is transferable to another country; (c) whether the country on the receiving end has the capacity to implement such a practice; and (d) to identify suitable approaches and methodologies for the replication of successful practices.

A. Assessment and transferability of innovations

35. Transferring innovations and successful practices is about knowledge transfer. It implies transferring ideas, as well as know-how, skills and lessons learned in the implementation process of an innovation. The transfer of an innovation may be described as "a structured learning process based on knowledge derived from experience coupled with human expertise capable of transforming that knowledge

into social action".[19] In line with this definition, the idea behind a specific innovation is more important than the innovation itself. Although an innovation in Government may be in relative terms a successful practice within a specific country, it might not lend itself to being replicated in other parts of the world because of the unique attributes of the case. It could be that a particular innovation has been implemented to respond to a very specific need within a certain administration and that the same needs are not felt in other administrations. Or it could be that because of the very particular characteristics of a central or local government administration, the best practice is not transferable. Therefore, practices, which were successful in one country, should not be blindly reproduced in another. Instead, their merits should be studied and tailored to local circumstances. There is evidence that a good practice is transferable when it is generic, adds value and involves simple processes and quick wins, is cost-effective, addresses an expressed or felt need among replicators and is effective. That is to say, if others have the same problem and the innovation has the potential to be useful, then it is transferable. Thus, transferability implies matching demand with supply for knowledge, expertise and experience.

B. Capacity to absorb an innovation

36. Innovation requires processes of adaptation, anticipation and openness to change. It is change that provides the opportunity to achieve new and different approaches. A precondition for replicating a best practice is that the Government that is implementing it has the necessary capacity to do so. Each organization is different and faces varied situations at particular points in time. The techniques required to promote organizational innovation must therefore be context specific. In other words, one size does not fit all. In order to adapt a successful practice, a number of steps can be followed, including (a) ensuring that the information about the successful practice, both in terms of its components and expected outcomes, is disseminated among those who will be responsible for its implementation and those who will benefit from the innovation; (b) putting in place teams to replicate the practice; (c) formulating a clear adoption policy and process; and (d) measuring and reporting progress on the implementation process to assess sustainability.

37. In terms of selecting what to replicate, it should be the recipient entity to define the characteristics of the innovation it can use. There are also different degrees of transfers, which include copying, emulation, mixtures, inspiration, etc. A number of instruments can be used to absorb a successful practice, including institutions and facilitators of the learning process and tools and guidelines. It is also useful to encourage adaptation rather than adoption, foster integration of monitoring and evaluation, take into account cultural considerations when designing transfer plans and celebrate incremental successes. In general, an innovation will be successfully adopted in other contexts if social and political actors in the recipient context see the problem addressed as a relevant public issue.

38. The knowledge factor in adapting a successful practice is also quite important. This relates to how officials are trained, their experience, their tolerance for change and other factors. Capacity-building requires tools and techniques that can build the ability of public officials to understand their own context and to achieve higher self-awareness of innovation possibilities and constraints within their organization. When selecting a specific innovation as a possible solution to a perceived problem, the organization that adapts the innovation is simultaneously part of the

dissemination process and of the creative process. Yet, if local conditions are not ripe, taking innovations from other contexts will not result in successful innovation adoption and diffusion. In order to absorb a best practice or the idea behind a best practice, the following elements should be taken into consideration: political culture; administrative culture and heritage; reform initiation among local actors; human resources; legal framework and regulatory issues; and leadership.

39. In terms of sustainability, there is broad agreement that innovations can be sustainable only if the new practices are integrated and embedded into daily operational procedures. That is, if they are institutionalized; if ownership by stakeholders is promoted; if the introduction of a new practice is accompanied by capacity-building (recruitment, placement, training, motivation); if sustainable economic resources, regardless of external funding, are guaranteed; if communication networks are established; and if a balanced and equitable distribution of benefits across the community is established in terms of socio-economic classes and other criteria. Moreover, it is necessary to institutionalize monitoring and evaluation procedures within the implementation and evaluation processes and establish a quality assurance system.

C. Methodologies for the replication of successful practices

40. Successful practices and innovations can be effectively transferred to other jurisdictions, and there is ample evidence that it can be done.[20] In order to facilitate the replication of a best practice in a specific national context (and once all of the above criteria have been satisfied), it is very important to identify a set of measures that can assist interested Governments in the transfer process and plan to use the acquired knowledge and to put it into practice. The creation of knowledge networks, where successful innovations are arranged in categories such as service delivery, regulation, consultation and partnership, governance, horizontality, etc., including the contact information of the innovators, can be a first important step. People who have taken risks and conducted successful innovations are proud of what they have achieved and are usually eager to share their knowledge. Placing the submissions on a database with a good search engine is, however, not sufficient since innovators focus on specific achievements and may not be aware of the broader implications of their innovation.

41. The transfer process begins by matching demand with supply by documenting and exchanging successful solutions through an intermediary, including international organizations, that is knowledgeable about successful practices. There are a number of steps that can be followed. The first step involves matching demand with supply, where the intermediary plays the role of a catalyst. The second step defines the scope of the transfer, with the intermediary acting as a broker between the two parties. The third step refers to the adaptation of the innovation to local conditions. Here, the role of the intermediary is that of a facilitator. The final step covers the actual implementation of the transfer and its evaluation. Here the intermediary is an evaluator. Awareness-building and media involvement are included throughout the four-step process, along with monitoring and evaluation.

42. There are a number of instruments that can be adopted to assist Governments in adapting innovations, including information-sharing and knowledge networks; twinning arrangements and practitioner-to-practitioner arrangements — engaging in

different jurisdictions; study tours with action planning; staff exchange; transfer guidelines; and awards. Tools and processes to be used in a replication process must encourage adaptation, not adoption, of the exemplary practice. In particular, peer-to-peer exchanges, including city-to-city transfers, are very effective since cities that are socially and economically similar often share problems with the same characteristics and are able to form cooperative solutions. As can be inferred, each of these approaches has strengths and weaknesses. Therefore, when adapting an innovation or successful practice, an analysis of the different approaches should be undertaken in order to determine the right mix of ingredients to fit the specific context.

VIII. Recommendations

43. In view of the above, and in order to promote innovation in governance to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, knowledge sharing of innovations and successful practices should be further promoted. This can be done by (a) maximizing the use of the United Nations Global On-line Network on Public Administration and Finance (UNPAN) as a repository of innovations in governance; (b) conducting analytical research on innovations in governance; (c) holding workshops on innovations for government officials; and (d) documenting and disseminating knowledge on innovations, including the achievements of the winners of the United Nations Public Service Awards. In this respect, the promotion of a standardized reporting format would be very useful, as well as the documentation of perceived problems and obstacles and how to overcome them, the roles, responsibilities and various contributions of different actors, and the factors leading to sustainability. Case studies could be prepared as teaching/learning resources in leadership capacity-building programmes. The establishment of networks of innovators in governance and public administration, which pool knowledge and expertise on innovations in specific themes and within specific regions, can also be an important means to disseminate knowledge and raise awareness among public officials of existing innovations in governance.

44. The transfer and adaptation of innovations in governance should also be enhanced by (a) strengthening the role of the Secretariat as a catalyst in the transfer process; (b) preparing customized guidelines for the transfer of successful practices and other training material; and (c) providing leadership capacity-building programmes on innovations. The exchange of information and experience among Governments (be it at the central or local levels) is also critical to facilitate the adaptation of an innovation, and it can be greatly facilitated by intermediary entities such as international, bilateral, and national organizations, universities, think tanks and NGOs. The role of intermediaries is an important aspect in this process as they provide the necessary guidance and expertise for the successful implementation and continuation of a project. Networks, on the other hand, provide the necessary information for transfers and exchanges, promote the idea of mutual collaboration and serve as avenues for effective communications. Within this context, the role of the Secretariat could be strengthened. In terms of promoting innovations and governance, and tools and guidelines to facilitate learning and the exchange of ideas, the Division for Public Administration and Development Management can build on the work that is being undertaken within the framework of its Programme on Innovation in Public Administration in the Euro-Mediterranean Region.

45. Attention should also be given to combining successful practices with good policies and legislation, and to mainstreaming national successful practices and knowledge systems as policy tools. Governments should be encouraged to adopt principles that support innovation in the public sector and the Secretariat could play a relevant role in facilitating the development of policies that encourage innovation in the public sector.

46. Finally, in order to maximize the chances of success of transferability, greater use of the documentation of the United Nations Public Service Award should be encouraged, as well as greater involvement of its winners, to spearhead transfer efforts and to foster willingness and commitment by inviting them to take part in expert group meetings and other national workshops.

Notes

[1] United Nations Millennium Project report, *Investing in Development: A Practical Plan to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals* (New York, 2005).

[2] See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2005, Supplement No. 24* (E/2005/44).

[3] The present paper has incorporated some of the key ideas that emerged during an expert meeting on methodologies for the transfer of innovations and best practices, organized by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in July 2005 in the United Republic of Tanzania.

[4] For a more extensive analysis of these four trends, see United Nations *Human Resources for Effective Public Administration in a Globalized World* (ST/ESA/PAD/SER.E/65).

[5] See Lopez, Tonatiuh Guillen, "Local capacities for adaptation of innovative ideas and practices: lessons from municipalities in Mexico", in *Innovations in Governance and Public Administration: Replicating What Works* (ST/ESA/PAD/SER.E/72).

[6] The term "best practice" will be used here with the understanding that it has many limitations and that "successful practices" is, as underlined by the Committee of Experts on Public Administration, a much more pertinent term.

[7] See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fiftieth Session, Supplement No. 37* (A/50/37).

[8] See www.unpan.org/dpepa_psaward.asp.

[9] See www.impumelelo.org.za.

[10] See www.innovations.harvard.edu.

[11] See *Citizen Participation on Pro-poor Budgeting* (United Nations publication Sales No. E.05.II.H.3).

[12] The Division for Public Administration and Development Management is developing adaptations of the Citizens' Report Cards in cooperation with a number of developing countries' audit institutions. It is also devising programmes to build capacity of developing countries' audit institutions to engage civil society in auditing performance related to service delivery. Technical cooperation activities have been launched to build capacities to empower local authorities to better address local needs, improve use of budgetary resources allocated to the poor, provide data analysis of regional and district disparities and empower local stakeholders to enhance their participation in the preparation, evaluation and revision of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers.

[13] *World Public Sector Report* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.03.II.H.3).

[14] "Broadband refers to telecommunications in which a wide band of frequencies is available to transmit information. As a result, more information can be transmitted in a given amount of time", *World Public Sector Report 2003*, op. cit.

[15] See http://open-government.mn.

[16] See Galimberti, Joseph, "Adaptation of best practices: the experience of the Institute of Public Administration of Canada", in *Innovations in Governance and Public Administration*, op. cit.

[17] See www.arashi.com/pipermail/ccpg/2004ql/001294.html.

[18] See www.innovationkorea.gii.

[19] See www.bestpractices.org.

[20] For example, 60 per cent of the winners of the IPAC Award are replicated throughout Canada, as well as many of the innovations of Awards programmes from, for example, Brazil, Mexico, the Philippines, etc. See *Innovations in Government and Public Administration*, op. cit.